



APRAISAL INTERVIEW

INFORMATION FOR SUPERVISORS AND
EMPLOYEES

For more information, see: www.personalgesprach.ethz.ch

ETH

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To simplify the readability of this document, we will use the neutral plural instead of the masculine or feminine form, or alternate between the masculine and feminine forms. In all cases, both genders are meant.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

meaning and purpose

The appraisal interview is a management and personnel development tool. According to the personnel regulations (Personalverordnung – PVO), supervisors must conduct an appraisal interview with their employees at least once a year. This is to help identify the current situation, assess performance and support personnel development.

This document contains information about:

- The goals of the appraisal interview at ETH Zurich
- The structure of the appraisal interview
- Concrete steps for preparing, conducting and analysing the appraisal interview

The appraisal interview

- Promotes cooperation between the supervisor and the employee
- Provides for the mutual agreement on responsibilities and goals as well as development steps
- Gives the employee clear feedback about his work performance and conduct
- Determines the employee's expectations in terms of his professional development and enables realistic development steps to be set
- Offers the supervisor the opportunity to receive feedback about his management style

Creating an appropriate climate

The requirements for conducting a successful appraisal interview are high. Often, previous experiences and expectations concerning such meetings have left a feeling of ambivalence.

Careful preparation of the appraisal interview and awareness while conducting it are therefore important conditions for success and contribute to a sense of added value for all the participants.

For a constructive appraisal interview in line with the leadership principles¹, the following features are of basic importance:

- Mutual feedback between partners of equal worth
- Trust and orientation towards development
- Open dialogues and mutual respect

The appraisal interview is therefore not a one-way assessment: during the interview, future goals and responsibilities are mutually defined and the conditions of the work situation are considered critically.

¹ See: www.personalgesprach.ethz.ch



Overview of the appraisal interview

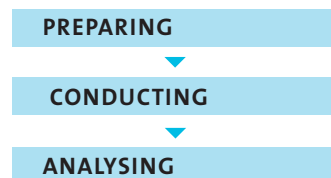
The appraisal interview helps determine the current situation and offers perspectives for the development of the employee as well as the supervisor. Personnel management is considered to be a mutual and continuous development. Mutual respect and trust are important to strengthen the sense of personal responsibility in the employee.

The appraisal interview includes a look back at the current appraisal period and a look forward to the next appraisal period. It covers the following topics:

- Responsibilities and goals
- Conduct and level of cooperation
- Overall assessment
- Personnel development
- Feedback

The appraisal interview form² offers information and support in preparing, conducting and documenting the interview.

The procedure for the appraisal interview has three steps³:



² See: www.personalgesprach.ethz.ch

³ The self-learning programme: «Introduction to the Appraisal Interview» also gives you the most important elements. This programme and related materials such as documents, examples and tips, helpful information in preparing, conducting and analysing the appraisal interview (blue highlights, e.g., [assessment criteria](#)), can be downloaded from: www.personalgesprach.ethz.ch



2. PREPARING THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

Organising and preparing the appraisal interview

After the date and time of the appraisal interview have been agreed upon, the supervisor and the employee each prepare individually for the meeting based on the appraisal interview form.

So that supervisors and employees both start from the same agreed responsibilities and goals, the mutual expectations should be clarified at the beginning of the appraisal period. In this context, it is recommended to consult the agreements from the previous year, if they are available.

Over the course of the appraisal period, work performance will be observed and recorded.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

- Extend the invitation to the meeting early.
- Clarify any questions the employee may have about procedure and content.
- Reserve sufficient time for each interview.
- Ensure that you are not interrupted during the interview.
- Take time to do the basic preparation and fill out the appraisal interview form appropriately:
 - Review the focal points of the employee's job.
 - Think about the employee's strengths and areas of development.
 - Assess the performance based on the assessment criteria agreed in the last interview.
 - Think about possible changes in the area of responsibility and map out new goals (see: [Setting goals](#)).
 - Take an overview of the [responsibilities, performance and conduct](#) of the team members. What can the team members learn from each other? Where do they complement each other? What is the contribution of the individual employee to the success of the team? What capabilities does the employee have that could be valuable for the team?
 - Critically examine your conduct and attitude towards the employee and your management style (see: [Leadership principles](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Prepare yourself carefully for the meeting by formulating your expectations. Use the appraisal interview form to help you with this.
- Make a self-evaluation of your work performance and your conduct: How well have I fulfilled the agreed-upon responsibilities and tasks and achieved the goals that were set? What have I managed well, what not? How well have I fulfilled the expectations regarding my conduct and my level of cooperation? What were the positive aspects of collaboration both within and outside the team, what was difficult?
- Prepare yourself to explain your evaluation of your own performance and conduct based on concrete examples.



- Think about where you would like to put the focus in your work: What responsibilities do I want to continue to assume, what new responsibilities do I want to take on? What goals shall I set for myself? (see: **Setting goals**)
- Think about your professional development plans: Where do I want to be in my profession in one to three years? What are my strengths and my weaknesses? What development steps and measures would bring me forward professionally? What can I do to improve how I fulfil the job requirements?
- Consider what **feedback** you would like to give your supervisor: What comments do I have about the working conditions? What do I value about working with my supervisor, what causes difficulties?


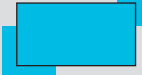
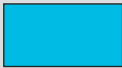



Setting responsibilities and goals

During the appraisal interview, supervisors and employees bring their ideas of the responsibilities and goals into the discussion. They clarify their mutual expectations and define new responsibilities and goals for the coming year. It is not sufficient to stipulate responsibilities and goals. Only a mutual decision creates mutual understanding and commitment which provides the basis for a transparent assessment. Therefore, it is essential to work out the **assessment criteria** for the fulfilment of the responsibilities and achievement of the goals together.

Assessing performance

To assess an employee's performance, **assessment criteria** must have been set and agreed at the end of the previous appraisal period. These criteria must be jointly and specifically established for the respective responsibilities and goals. The performance for each of the listed performance aspects under Responsibilities and Goals and under Conduct and Level of Cooperation will be assessed. The Overall Assessment is a composite assessment of all the performance aspects. The performance is assessed by assigning a category. There are six descriptions available, A-F; these are not to be understood as grades or marks, but rather as illustrations of how well the performance agrees with the expectations:



	A++: considerably exceeds the requirements
	A+: exceeds the requirements
	A: fulfils the requirements successfully
	B: mostly fulfils the requirements
	C: partially fulfils the requirements
	D: does not fulfil the requirements

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

- Support your assessment of the employee's performance and conduct from the records you have kept, and be sure to consider many impressions and observations and not just one single incident (see: [Appraisal errors](#)).
- Over the course of the appraisal period, keep appropriate records about her performance and the conduct (see: [Manager's notes](#)) and support her in achieving the goals set in the last interview.
- To assess the employee's performance, use the assessment criteria that were mutually established at the beginning of the appraisal period.
- Always use concrete facts and observations in the assessment and add a short commentary (see: [Appraisal errors](#)).
- Make an overall assessment that expresses the total of the performance for all the individually assessed performance aspects. The overall assessment is not the arithmetic average of all individual assessments, rather it is a total picture of the performance of the employee.
- In case the employee repeatedly exceeds the requirements to a significant extent (description A++) or only partially fulfils or does not fulfil the requirements (descriptions C and D), contact the Personnel Department to discuss how to proceed.



3. CONDUCTING THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

Opening the interview

At the beginning of the appraisal interview, the supervisor and employee should clarify the procedure of the appraisal interview.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

- Explain the goals and the procedure of the appraisal interview to the employee.
- Create a comfortable, undisturbed atmosphere.

Conducting the interview

The topics in the appraisal interview form give an orientation framework for the content of the interview. Both supervisor and employee exchange alternately about their views and ideas on these topics in a dialogue based on a spirit of partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

... general

- Clearly state the employee's strengths and weaknesses and support these with concrete examples.
- Give any criticism relevantly and directly (see: [Difficult interview situations](#)).
- Keep in mind that this is a dialogue. Let the employee present his view and his assessment and take this into consideration (see: [Difficult interview situations](#)).
- Make sure by way of follow-up questions that you and the employee have understood each other correctly and that the agreements have been accepted.

... on responsibilities and goals, conduct and level of cooperation

- Formulate your satisfaction with the employee's fulfilment of the responsibilities and achievement of the goals, conduct and level of cooperation and give the employee time to express his opinion of your appraisal.
- Discuss setting goals and the expectations for the next appraisal period. Let the employee make his own suggestions for agreements.
- Make sure that the agreements are appropriate for the qualifications and experience of the employee.

... on the overall assessment

- State your assessment of the employee's performance under Responsibilities and Goals and under Conduct and Level of Cooperation and indicate the corresponding category (A-F). Comment on your assessment.
- State and comment on the Overall Assessment. Give the employee a chance to state his position.



- Talk about the similarities and the differences in your assessment and the self-assessment of the employee. Discuss these aspects.

... on personnel development

- Ask the employee about his professional goals, development and educational wishes. Ask him for concrete suggestions for the development steps. Support him to formulate his own development steps.
- Ask what form of support would be helpful for achieving the goals set.
- Agree on concrete development steps and measures.

... on feedback

- Ask the employee for feedback on the working conditions and climate and about the supervisor's conduct. Explain why feedback is important to you.
- Listen to the feedback without commenting and without giving any explanation or justification. Ask for concrete examples (see: [Giving and receiving feedback](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Give your own opinion about your performance and your conduct. Articulate your opinion and your ideas clearly. Ask, if you haven't understood something or want a more detailed explanation.
- State your position on the supervisor's assessment of your performance under Responsibilities and Goals and under Conduct and Level of Cooperation. Express yourself about the Overall Assessment.
- State your ideas and goals for the next appraisal period.
- Suggest measures and development steps that would support you to achieve the set goals.
- In your suggestions about personnel development, differentiate between goals on the one hand and development steps and measures on the other: Goals describe a desired state, development steps and measures describe the way to achieve that state.



Closing the interview

To close the interview, the results of the discussion are summarised and the further procedure discussed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

- Discuss the consequences the outcome of the interview will have.
- State the next concrete steps that you will undertake.
- If the employee is not in agreement with the outcome of the interview, inform her about the further procedure regarding this. (see: [Arbitration process](#)).
- In addition, express yourself about how you found the interview and the atmosphere. Ask the employee for her evaluation of the interview.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Talk about points that were left open or unclear.
- Summarise the agreements made in your own words.
- Check off whether you are in agreement with the assessment or not and add your comments about that, if necessary.

4. ANALYSING THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

Documenting and reviewing the interview

After the appraisal interview, follow-up steps for documenting and safeguarding the results are required.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

- Give your employee a copy of the completed appraisal interview form.
- Initiate, if necessary, concrete measures that have been agreed.
- Review the discussion (see: [Review of the interview](#)): What insights have you gained? Have you touched on all the relevant points? How was the interview for you personally? What would you pay more attention to in the next appraisal interview? How well were you able to strengthen your employee in his potential, and promote his commitment and his motivation?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- Plan the next concrete steps that result from the agreements.
- Go through the interview in your mind. What went well? What was difficult? Have you touched on all the relevant points? Did you have enough opportunity to express yourself?



5. THE PROCESS AT A GLANCE

	Supervisors	Employees
Preparing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Invite the employee to the appraisal interview in good time. ■ Prepare the appraisal interview based on the form, if applicable taking into account the agreements from the previous year, assess the performance and comment, carry out the overall assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prepare yourself for the appraisal interview based on the form. ■ Make a self-assessment of your performance using concrete examples. ■ Think of new goals and agreements for the next appraisal period. ■ Formulate your ideas and wishes concerning personal development. ■ Prepare your feedback on the working conditions and on the conduct of your supervisor.
Conducting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clarify the goals and the procedure of the appraisal interview. ■ State the performance assessments and the overall assessment and give your comments. ■ Work out mutual agreements for the next appraisal period: responsibilities, goals, conduct, development steps and measures. ■ Request feedback from the employee. ■ Summarise the results of the interview orally and conclude the appraisal interview. ■ Give feedback on the appraisal interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State your own assessment of your performance ■ Make suggestions for the agreements for the next appraisal period. ■ Suggest development steps and measures. ■ Give feedback on the working conditions and the conduct of the supervisor. ■ Mention any unclear points or open issues. ■ Give feedback on the appraisal interview.
Analysing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Give the employee a copy of the completed appraisal interview form. ■ Initiate measures based on the agreements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement the agreed measures.